At 1700 on 15 October, the tenth day of the war, the IDF kicked off their crossing operation with an artillery barrage all along the Egyptian front.[113] Simultaneously with this display of firepower, Raviv launched his probing attacks toward Televizia and Hamutal. Two hours later, at 1900, Reshef embarked on his critical mission with ninety-seven tanks; his reinforced brigade was composed of four tank and three infantry-paratroop battalions on half-tracks. He managed to avoid any Egyptian resistance until three kilometers north of Deversoir, where he ran into an Egyptian defensive position, sparking alarms throughout the 16th Infantry Division. For the next several days, Reshef's brigade would be engaged in close-quarter combat waged in periods of utter confusion. At 0400 on 16 October, after heavy fighting most of the night, Reshef's tank force had dwindled from ninety-six to forty-one, or a loss of fifty-six tanks in a mere twelve hours—a figure comparable to the losses of the Egyptian 3d Armored Brigade on 14 October. By 1800, Reshef's inventory increased to eighty-one tanks, as Sharon released more tanks to help secure the crossing site.[114] The entire assault force would experience intense fighting and heavy losses in men and equipment for every kilometer of ground gained.

After the war, many Israeli participants found it difficult to describe the horrors of close combat in the Chinese Farms area. But Sharon provided his own poignant account of the carnage present on the battlefield: "It was as if a hand-to-hand battle of armor had taken place.... Coming close you could see Egyptian and Jewish dead lying side-by-side, soldiers who had jumped from their burning tanks and died together. No picture could capture the horror of the scene, none could encompass what had happened there. On our side that night [15th/16th] we had lost 300 dead and hundreds more wounded."[115] This battle of attrition served Sadat's purpose, as the Israelis suffered heavy losses on the battlefield, even though, from another perspective, the initiative was passing to the Israelis.

Stiff Egyptian resistance prevented Reshef from accomplishing all his missions, but seizing the crossing site proved no major problem. So at 0135 on 16 October, Matt began crossing over with his 600 paratroopers. At 0643, the first of thirty tanks traversed the Suez Canal aboard rafts. By 0800, Matt had expanded his bridgehead on the west bank some five kilometers in depth. Sharon and Erez would later join him on the African continent. Despite successfully crossing to the west bank, however, the Israelis failed to secure a corridor to support Matt. The Egyptian 16th Infantry Brigade, which had seen little combat until now, repelled Israeli attempts to open up Tirtur or Akavish Road for their bridging equipment. This Egyptian success virtually cut off the Israeli force on the west bank, causing Dayan to recommend an abortion of the operation. For thirty-seven hours after 1130 on 16 October, no more Israeli tanks crossed the canal, as Southern Command concentrated its resources on opening a secure route to Matt.

The unexpected Egyptian resistance forced Southern Command to change its plan.[116] By late morning on 16 October, Bar-Lev, anxious about the fate of the small force on the west bank, ordered Adan to commit his division to help open Akavish and Tirtur Roads. To clear out the Egyptians dug into dikes in the Chinese Farms required more infantry, and Southern Command turned to the paratroop battalion under Colonel Uzi Ya'iri, positioned at Ras Sudar since the first day of the war. Arriving at 2200 by helicopter, Ya'iri felt pressured to go immediately into action even though he lacked adequate intelligence or preparation. For the next two days, the paratroopers would experience intense combat with heavy casualties. Dayan, who met with Ya'iri on 21 October, described his touching encounter with Ya'iri in the midst of war:

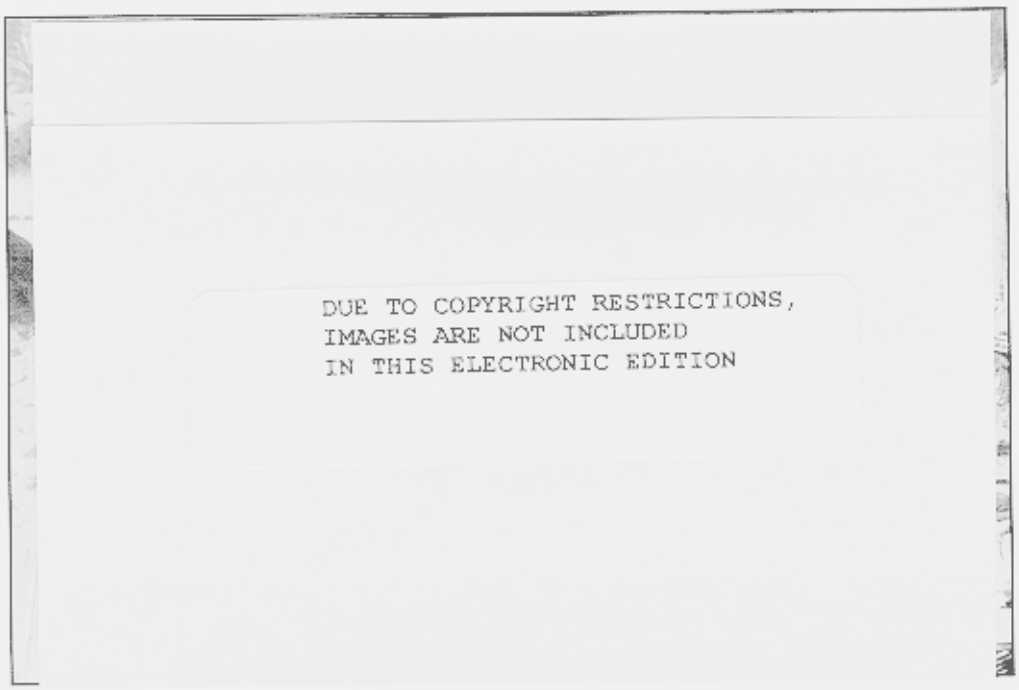
Mid-East Wars: The Israeli Commandos

Israeli paratroopers under heavy fire in the "Chinese Farm" area

> I found him worn out. I knew him well, ever since he had headed the chief of staff's bureau under Bar-Lev. He was a first-class fellow, straightforward, sensible, and very responsible. I knew he had lost a lot of men in combat, but I had not expected to find him so downcast. His face bore an expression of ineffable sadness, and his eyes, swollen from lack of sleep, were—what was worse—without luster. We talked about his battle to open the access road to the Canal. Chaim Bar-Lev, who was with me, said, "Uzi, you suffered heavy casualties, but you opened the road!" Uzi held to his own: The road was opened not by me but by the armor. I would like to be able to say that my unit did it, but this was not so. We had suffered seventy casualties because we went into action too hastily, without proper intelligence on the enemy's defenses.[117]

Contrary to Ya'iri's personal assessment, the paratroopers certainly had played an important role in opening the access road, but their accomplishment seemed diminished by so many casualties. After the war's conclusion, the Israeli public would express similar feelings, but this time with political ramifications.

Egyptian soldiers and officers demonstrated unexpected resolve despite the emerging serious threat to their rear. Second Army directed the first major Egyptian response, which occurred on 16 October. Second Army committed the 1st Armored Brigade with thirty-nine tanks and the 18th Mechanized Infantry Brigade with thirty-one tanks to reinforce the southern flank of the 16th Infantry Brigade. Egyptian armored counterattacks pushed Reshef southward up Lexicon Road for several kilometers, while the mechanized infantry helped secure the defensive positions in the Chinese Farms sector. On the west bank, a reinforced battalion from the Egyptian 116th Mechanized Infantry Brigade attacked Matt's small force. The Israelis managed to defeat



Upgunned Israeli Patton M-48s preparing to cross the Suez Canal on assault rafts

the Egyptian task force quickly, and Colonel Hussein Ridwan, the Egyptian brigade commander, lost his life in the operation.[118]

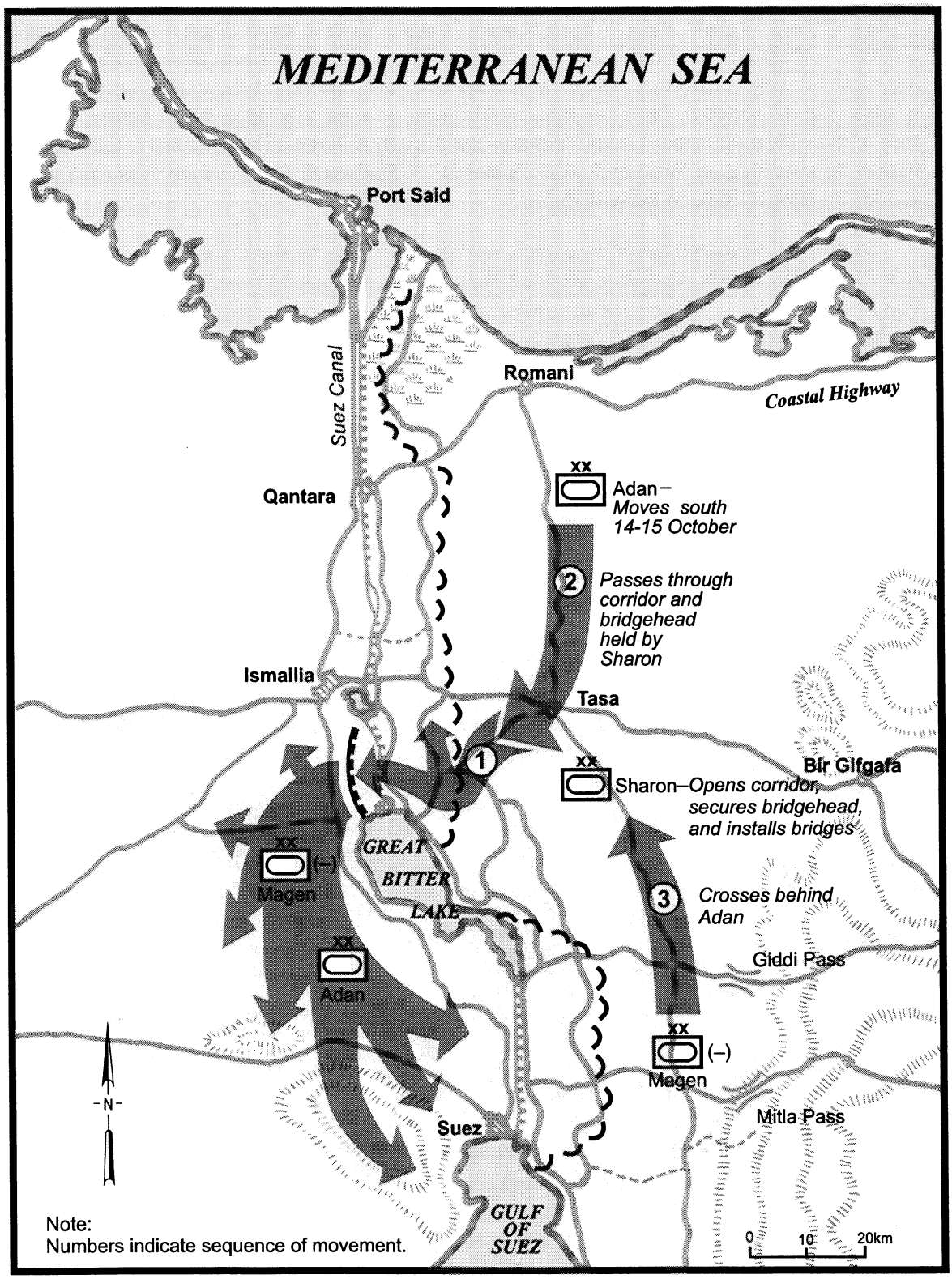
A major Egyptian effort to defeat Operation Stouthearted Men occurred on 17 October. Center Ten, located far back in Cairo, now attempted to coordinate a three-pronged attack against the crossing sites on both banks. In their decision making, however, senior Egyptian commanders labored under one major restriction: Sadat prohibited the withdrawal of any Egyptian troops from the east to the west bank out of fear of losing any ground gained in the crossing operation. This restriction forced Ahmad Ismail to make his main effort to defeat the Israeli countercrossing on the east bank, rather than on the west bank where the terrain and the air defense umbrella favored the Egyptians. On the east bank, the Egyptian 21st Armored Division, led by its 1st Armored Brigade, launched an attack north to south from the Second Army's sector, while the Egyptian 25th Armored Brigade, from Third Army, advanced south to north. On the west bank, the remainder of the 116th Mechanized Infantry Brigade assaulted Matt's positions. The results proved devastating for the Egyptians. The 1st Armored Brigade lost twenty of its fifty-three tanks, whereas an Israeli ambush destroyed sixty-five of seventy-five T-62s from the 25th Armored Brigade. The 116th Mechanized Infantry Brigade experienced similar destruction.[119]

The five days of intense fighting from 14 to 18 October finally took their toll on the Egyptian Army. The 21st Armored Division was down to forty tanks; the 16th Infantry Division's tank force had dwindled to only twenty from a prewar figure of 124. Among the killed or wounded were two division (23d and 16th) and two brigade (116th and 23d) commanders. Not everything spelled tactical defeat for the Egyptians, however. The commitment of the 23d Armored Brigade,

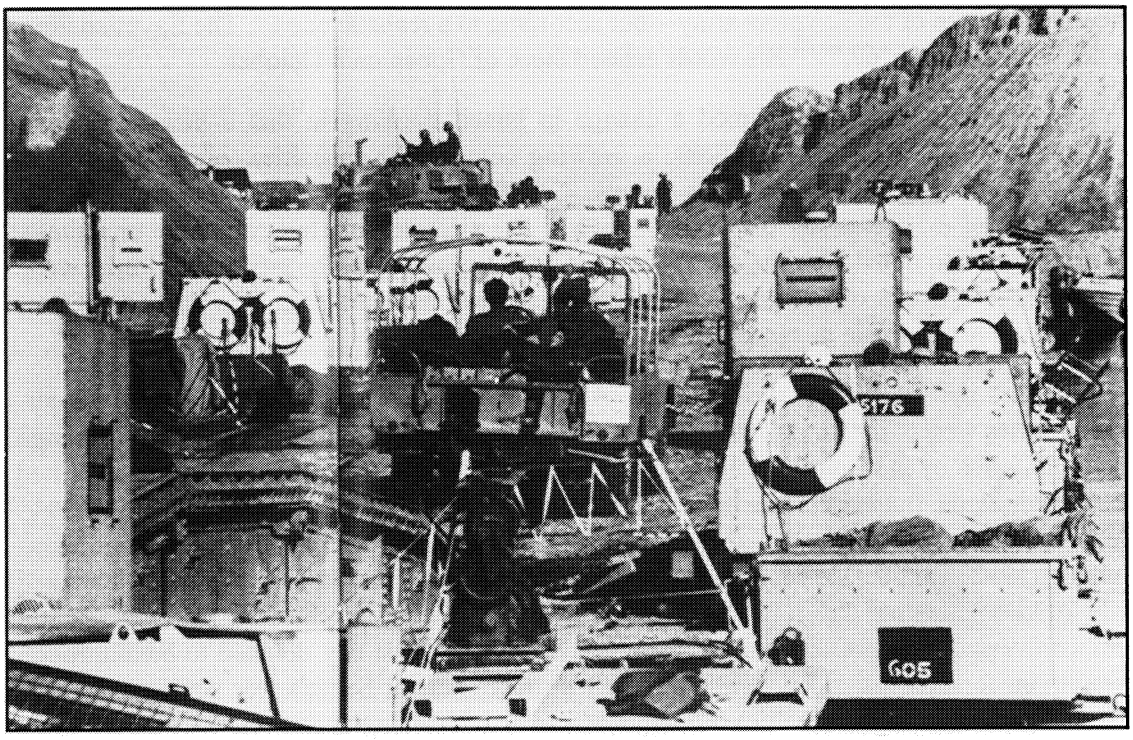
150th Paratroop Brigade, and 139th Commando Group—all from the strategic reserve—stopped Sharon's attempt to push north and capture Ismailia, a feat that would have threatened the logistical lifeblood of Second Army. But on the east bank, the Egyptians experienced a major setback. On 18 October, the 16th Infantry Brigade, now heavily depleted in both men and ammunition and outgunned and outmanned to boot, finally abandoned its positions in the Chinese Farms, thus opening up Tirtur and Akavish Roads.[120] The Israeli forces on the west bank were no longer seriously threatened with defeat.

Southern Command moved to exploit this situation. During the night of 17–18 October, Adan's division finally crossed to the west bank, three days behind schedule.[121] (See map 7.) The first unit set foot on the African continent at 2330 on 18 October; by 0530, both Amir and Nir had completed the move of their armored brigades to the west bank. At 1305 on 18 October, Southern Command decided to send Keren's Armored Brigade and half of Magen's division to the west bank, but with another change in plans. Adan now would spearhead the drive to Suez City, with Magen protecting his right flank instead of Sharon as originally planned. Sharon was now to maintain the bridgehead on the west bank, push north to Ismailia, and attempt to capture Missouri on the east bank. The expectation of a quick and decisive defeat of the Egyptian Armed Forces was nowhere implicit in this plan. After Adan had crossed to the east bank on 18 October, Elazar appeared before the cabinet at 2100 and provided a more sober evaluation of the operation: "a battle is not being conducted according to the more optimistic model—the one that predicts

Disabled Egyptian T-54s in the zone west of the Suez Canal



Map 7. Sinai front, Operation Plan Gazelle



Israeli Tank Battles

Israelis moving to cross the canal on 17 October

The War of Atonement: October, 1973

Israeli tanks crossing a pontoon bridge onto the canal's west bank

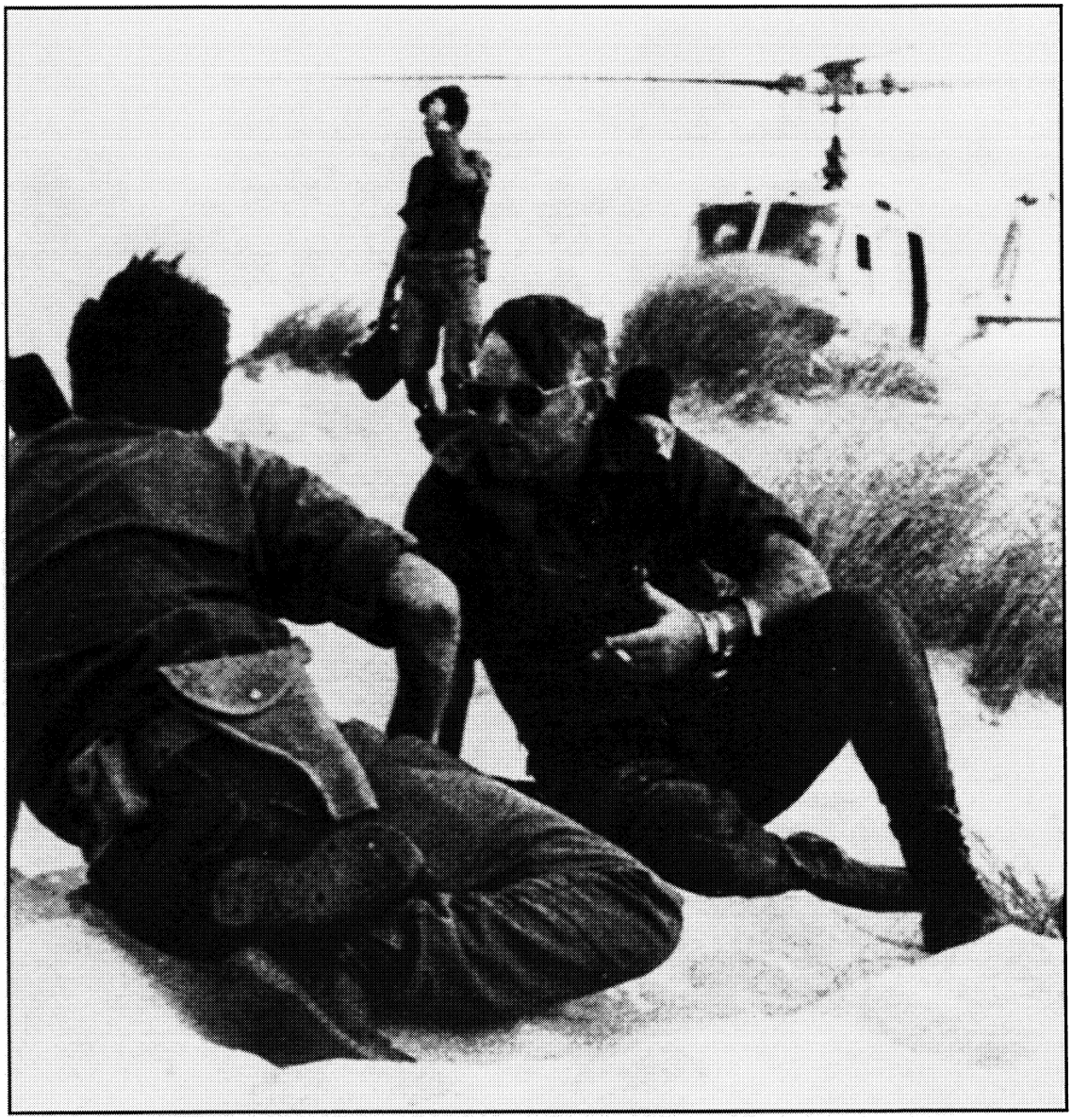
the total collapse of the Egyptian army—but according to a realistic one . . . The Egyptian army is not what it was in '67."[122] His words echoed those of Gonen on 8 October.

Egyptian resistance had forced a change in Israeli thinking in that a new factor now influenced the planning of operations: a growing concern for casualties, especially of elite infantry, which was always in short supply. Consequently, commanders found themselves gravitating toward operations that would favor armor tactics without a heavy reliance on infantry support. As Adan noted after the war, "The longer the war went on, the greater our losses were. Now after two weeks of fighting, we considered and reconsidered each step in terms of how many losses it was liable to cause."[123]

Elazar's realism proved well-founded. As Israeli ground troops destroyed surface-to-air-missile bases west of the Suez Canal, the gap in the Egyptian air defense system widened enough for exploitation by the Israeli Air Force. To plug the air corridor, Center Ten in Cairo committed its own air force, but Israeli pilots were able to win the dogfights and gain control of the air. Despite the reassertion of Israeli air power, Adan still required five days of virtually continuous fighting (19–23 October) to encircle, but not seize, Suez City. This "dash" to Suez City averaged only 20 kilometers per day, a far cry from the lightning pace of the Six Day War when Israeli armor traversed over 200 kilometers in four days, with the first day devoted to breakthrough assaults on fortified Egyptian positions.[124] Most important for Sadat's war strategy, the IDF continued to suffer high casualties throughout the countercrossing operation.

Despite their slow progress, the Israelis slowly turned the tide of war in their favor, thereby dulling much of the luster achieved by the Egyptian Armed Forces in the first part of the war. Numerous problems now plagued the Egyptian military. First, Second Army headquarters had failed to take decisive action when the word that the Israelis were on the west bank had first reached it at 0130 on 16 October. Then, based on erroneous intelligence estimates, Second Field Army Command mistakenly sent insufficient forces, in piecemeal fashion, into the Deversoir area. General Command made the same mistake when it tried to take command of the situation from the comfort of Cairo. The Israelis had defeated all Egyptian forces during the first forty-eight hours of the countercrossing operation. Later, over the next week of continuous, heavy fighting, senior Egyptian commands were unable to coordinate sufficient combat power to destroy Israeli forces on the west bank. Piecemeal, uncoordinated, and dilatory counterattacks characterized the Egyptian responses, although the Egyptians fought well on the defensive. The Egyptian Armed Forces clearly suffered from an overly centralized command system that retarded reaction times to the point of being far too slow for maneuver warfare.

The Israeli countercrossing eventually created a serious command crisis in Cairo.[125] On 18 October, Ahmad Ismail dispatched Shazli to the front to assume command of Second Army and defeat the Israeli effort on the west bank. After spending forty-four hours with Second Army, Shazli returned to Center Ten during the evening of 20 October and filed a pessimistic report, evaluating the military situation as critical. He insisted on the withdrawal of four armored brigades from the east bank to the west bank within twenty-four hours to prevent the Israelis from encircling Egyptian forces on the east bank. Ahmad Ismail, however, refused to withdraw any forces, in keeping with Sadat's insistence on not losing any terrain on the east bank. There was also the fear that withdrawing armored forces from the east bank might spark panic among the troops, as Egyptian soldiers recalled the rout in 1967 when some commanders abandoned



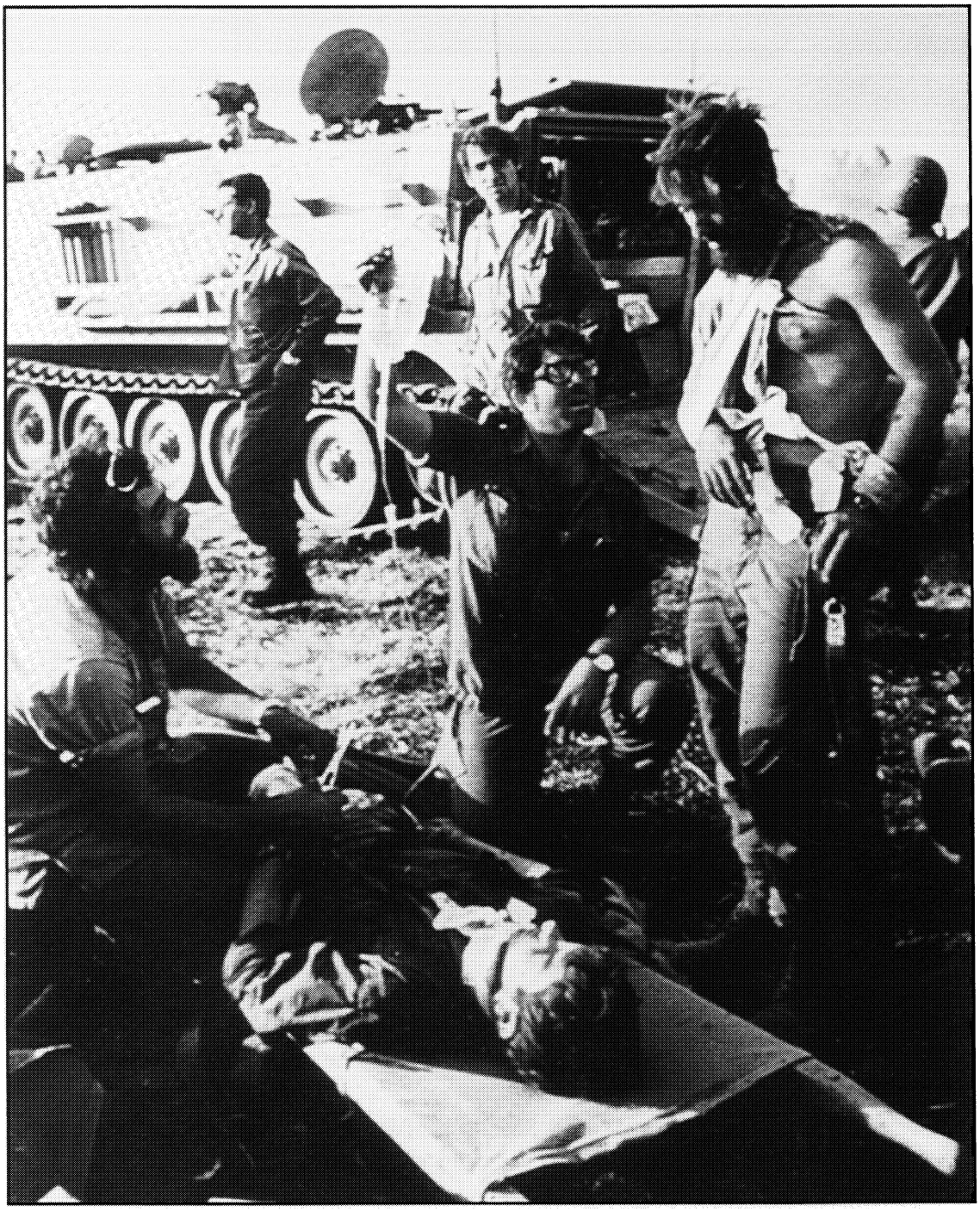
The War of Atonement: October, 1973

An impromptu meeting by General Adan with one of his brigade commanders in the field

their units. Unable to budge Ahmad Ismail, Shazli, out of desperation, appealed for Sadat to come to Center Ten to make the critical decision in person and for the historical record.

At 2230 on 20 October, Sadat arrived at Center Ten to solve the impasse among his senior commanders caused by Shazli's intransigence. He first met privately with Ahmad Ismail for nearly an hour. Then, after listening to the various opinions of his senior commanders in a general meeting (except for those of Shazli, who remained silent throughout), Sadat simply decided: "We will not withdraw a single soldier to the west." With these words, he promptly departed without hinting what would be the next step.

This late meeting on 20—21 October left Sadat a troubled man. Upon his return to Tahra Palace at 0210, Sadat called his senior advisers and informed them of his decision to accept a



Mid-East Wars: The Yom Kippur War

Israeli medical teams in life-saving operations

cease-fire in place. Asked for an explanation for his sudden change in strategy, Sadat described how his trip to Center Ten had convinced him that the country and the armed forces were in grave peril, and the only option was to seek a cessation of hostilities with the help of both superpowers.[126] Sadat, now shaken in confidence, clearly placed his hope squarely on the diplomatic front.

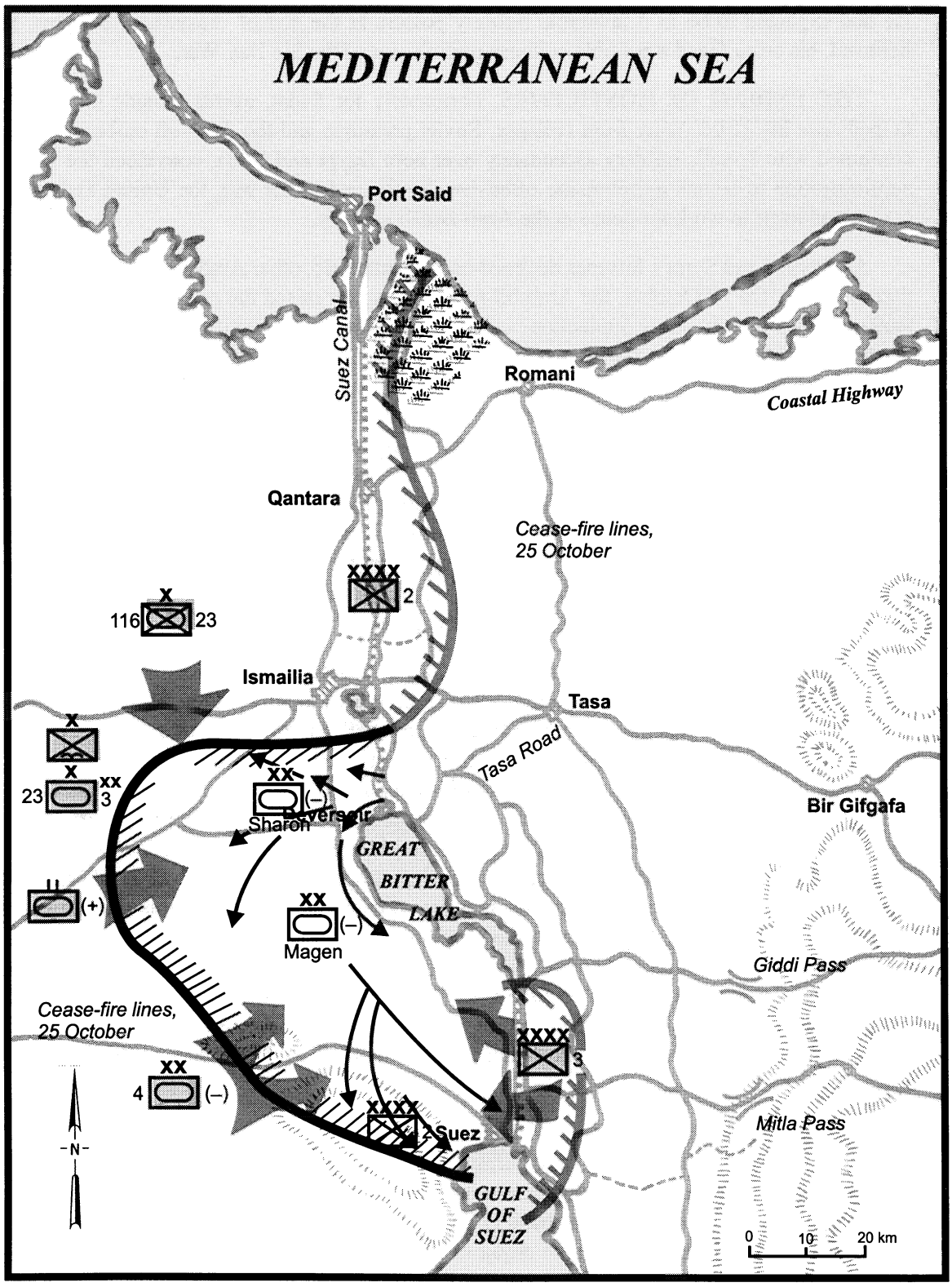
He had expected to be in a favorable military posture at the end of hostilities, but now, he believed, his army faced a possible collapse reminiscent of the Six Day War.

THE ENDING OF HOSTILITIES. Fortunately for Sadat, events outside his control helped save his Third Army from collapse. Soviet pressures and the Arab oil embargo, when combined with Israel's military ascendancy over both Egypt and Syria, convinced the Nixon administration to launch a diplomatic offensive. By the end of the war, the United States had committed itself to work for peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

As Egypt's and Syria's fortunes declined on the battlefield, other Arab states moved to help their brethren. On 17 October, the Arab oil-producing states raised the price of oil 70 percent, announced a 5 percent cut in production, and threatened to reduce output 5 percent every month until Israel withdrew from territories seized in the Six Day War. On 18 October, the Saudi government announced a 10 percent cut in output. When, on 19 October, Nixon formally requested from Congress a $2.2 billion emergency aid package for Israel, Saudi Arabia retaliated the next day by placing an oil embargo on the United States; other Arab states quickly followed Riyadh's lead. The military struggle between the Arabs and Israelis now took the added form of economic warfare, which shook stock markets around the world and heightened concerns in western Europe and Japan. The Nixon administration, although besieged by the Watergate scandal, felt pressured to take center stage in an effort to bring a cease-fire to the conflict. Kissinger, who had been waiting for the right moment to intervene with a major diplomatic initiative, began what evolved into a step-by-step process.

While continuing to provide massive military aid to Israel (begun on 13 October), Washington now moved on the diplomatic front to assume the role of honest broker. The United States stood as the only power capable of forcing Israel to cease offensive operations against Egypt. On 19 October, Kissinger accepted a Soviet invitation to visit Moscow to discuss bringing hostilities to an end. He departed the day before the Saudis announced their oil embargo. It was in this context that Sadat went to Center Ten late on 20 October to meet with his senior commanders, knowing that both superpowers were moving to bring about an end to the armed conflict. Hoping for a diplomatic breakthrough, the Egyptian president desperately wanted to keep all his gains on the east bank and thus remained adamant on not withdrawing any forces from the east to the west bank. Meanwhile, in discussions at the Kremlin on 21 October, the Americans and Soviets agreed to sponsor a United Nations resolution for a cease-fire to commence on 22 October at 1820. Before returning to the United States, Kissinger visited Tel Aviv on 22 October to meet personally with Golda Meir and discuss the terms of the cease-fire. Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin meanwhile traveled to Cairo to confer with Sadat. Both Egypt and Israel agreed to a cease-fire in place.[127] (See map 8.)

The commencement of the cease-fire on 22 October at 1820 found Israeli forces north of Suez City, short of surrounding Third Army, though the Egyptian situation was becoming precarious. Israeli artillery fire could interdict the Suez to Cairo road, the main artery supplying the two Egyptian divisions on the east bank in Third Army's sector. But only ground troops could effectively cut off Third Army, which required the surrounding of Suez City. Fortunately for Israel, United Nations Resolution 338, which called for a cease-fire in place (sponsored by both superpowers), failed to provide for a peacekeeping force to supervise its implementation. This omission provided Israel with an opportunity to continue its advance southward.



Map 8. Sinai front, 18–24 October 1973

In the evening of 22 October, the Israeli cabinet formally approved continuing military operations if the Egyptians failed to observe the cease-fire.[128] For their part, Israeli field commanders, frustrated because they could only interdict the Suez City to Cairo road with artillery fire, looked for any excuse to resume offensive operations and surround Third Army. Adan, whose division had led the armored advance south toward Suez City, put it this way: "If I were to decide to respond to fire against me not only with fire of my own but with fire *and* movement, would not all levels not welcome such a decision? . . . After pondering the matter for some time, it was with a heavy heart that I came to the decision that we would have to finish off the job the next day."[129] On the morning of 23 October, Golda Meir, who was anxious to encircle Third Army, gave her approval for the commencement of offensive operations, and the Israeli Army continued its attack southward until units reached Adabiyya, a port town south of Suez City.[130]

In response to Sadat's protests of Israeli truce violations, Tel Aviv claimed that Egyptian troops had fired on Israeli forces first, thereby provoking Israel to resume its attack to seal Third Army's fate. Meanwhile, the Israeli Army had surrounded Third Army's forces, some 30,000 to 40,000 troops and 300 tanks from the 7th and 9th Infantry Divisions. Although a second cease-fire went into effect on 25 October, fighting for control of Suez City continued throughout the day. This time, however, a United Nations peace-keeping force arrived in relatively quick order to monitor compliance, and Israel, under pressure from the United States, eventually allowed nonmilitary supplies to reach Suez City and the isolated Third Army. The plight of Third Army, however, remained precarious until the lifting of the encirclement in February 1974.

As the battlefield situation became rather desperate for the Egyptians, Sadat appealed to both the United States and the Soviet Union to send troops to enforce the cease-fire. The Kremlin, determined to stand by its Arab allies, placed seven airborne divisions on alert and implemented other military measures designed to facilitate the rapid transportation of combat troops to the Middle East. Meanwhile, in a letter employing tough language, Brezhnev informed Nixon of the Soviet willingness to dispatch combat troops to the Middle East, unilaterally if necessary. In response, at 2341 (Washington time) on 24 October, the United States began ordering all its armed forces on Defense Condition III, the highest state of readiness in peacetime, the first such global alert since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Soviet intelligence no doubt quickly detected this new level of readiness of conventional and nuclear forces around the world. Confronted with the possibility of unwanted escalation, the Soviets backed down from their threat of unilateral intervention, and the international crisis began easing the next day. Despite the brevity of the crisis, both superpowers were becoming deeply immersed in resolving the fourth Arab-Israeli war, and Sadat could find some satisfaction in this development.[131]

Although the battlefield situation had become rather desperate for the Egyptians, all was not lost for Egypt militarily. Despite the confusion in General Command, Egyptian combat units continued to resist with determination. A combined Egyptian commando and paratrooper force, for example, registered a tactical victory of strategic import by stopping Sharon's repeated attempts to capture Ismailia, whose loss would have seriously imperiled the logistical lifeblood to Second Army. Moreover, Egyptian townspeople, militia, and regular troops prevented Israeli forces from capturing Suez City. In its failed assault on the town, Adan's division lost 80 killed and 120 wounded, too heavy a cost for no tactical gain.[132] After the war, grieved Israeli families would question the wisdom of storming a city whose capture was clearly not essential for the

Israeli troops by the sweet-water canal near Ismailia

defeat of Third Army. Moreover, to everyone's surprise, including Sadat and senior officers back in Cairo, surrounded Egyptian forces on the east bank maintained their combat integrity. Finally, and perhaps most important, Second Army's position remained secure on both the east and west banks.

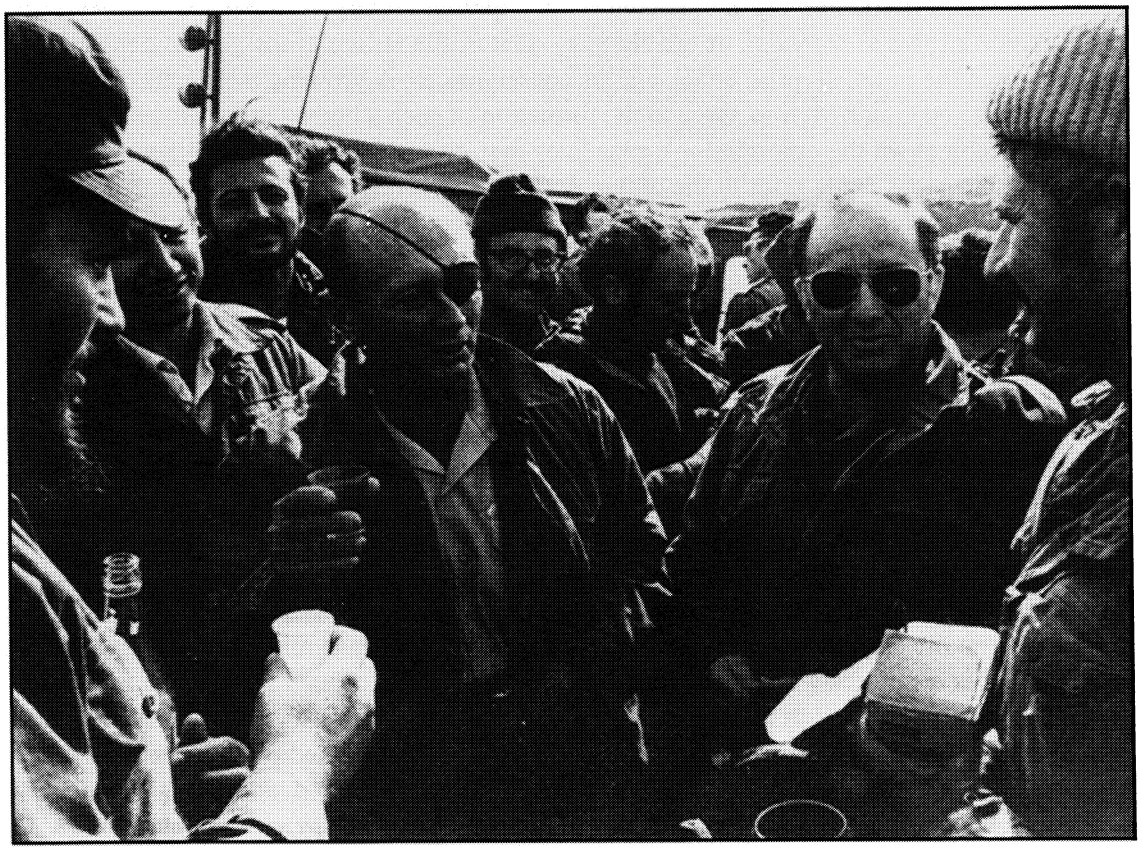
Thus, the final week of the war offered more sobering combat experiences for Israel, despite its operational and tactical successes, thereby undermining any chance of a clear Israeli strategic victory. During this last phase of the war, the Egyptian Armed Forces continued to inflict a heavy toll in Israeli blood and treasure. In this regard, Egyptian field officers and line troops made up for the senior command's seeming paralysis by fulfilling Sadat's strategic objective of inflicting the greatest possible losses in men and equipment on the IDF. Furthermore, by clearly demonstrating a new combat staying power, the Egyptian Armed Forces presented Israel with vivid testimony that a future conflict between Egypt and Israel could exact a heavy price in Jewish lives. The full impact of this lesson would surface only after the war, once the Israelis had time to reflect on the conflict.

IMPACT IN ISRAEL. The 1973 war ended on a high military note for Israel. The IDF had recovered from its initial shock to seize the initiative on both fronts. In the Sinai, the encirclement of Suez City and Third Army undermined Sadat's confidence and provided the Israeli government with a strong bargaining position after the war. On the Golan front, the Israelis had counterattacked to regain all lost territory and even penetrated twenty kilometers into Syria to reach within forty kilometers of Damascus. In light of these Israeli operational and tactical achievements on both fronts, many Western observers have unabashedly awarded Israel a military victory in 1973. In contrast, Israeli society, for the most part, assessed the 1973 War in

rather more negative terms, even though the conflict ended with the IDF possessing the initiative.[133]

A decisive victory on either front had eluded the Israelis. Once the second cease-fire was realized, the Israelis quickly understood how ill prepared their army had been for the war. The outbreak of hostilities had surprised virtually everyone in Israel. Worse, no one expected three weeks of intense fighting with such heavy casualties. During the war, moreover, there were moments of great anguish and peril. When the fighting ended, Israeli losses proved staggering for a small country of over three million people that had come to expect a decisive victory with relatively few casualties in a short war. Over 2,800 Israelis had been killed, at least 7,500 had been wounded, and some 500 Israelis had become prisoners of war. If the United States had experienced equivalent losses in the Vietnam War, it would have suffered 200,000 American dead—a figure four times the actual number.

Furthermore, the Israelis incurred a new type of casualty. For the first time in its modern history, Israeli soldiers suffered a high incidence of combat shock, something for which its medical corps had failed to prepare adequately. Until 1973, few psychiatric cases resulting from battle situations were reported in Israel, in large measure because previous conflicts—with the sole exception of the first Arab-Israeli war—were quick victories with relatively few casualties. In 1973, however, Israeli soldiers fought in a war noted for its lethality and intense, prolonged fighting. Ariel Sharon, one of Israel's most flamboyant and controversial commanders, pointed



The War of Atonement: October, 1973

Defense Minister Dayan and Major General Hofi visit the troops

out the uniqueness of this fourth Arab-Israeli conflict: "I have been fighting for twenty-five years, and all the rest were just battles. This was a real war."[134] The intense fighting in 1973 produced a high ratio of psychiatric cases, with figures ranging from as low as 12.3 to as high as 23.1 percent of all nonfatal casualties. Unprepared to treat such victims of war in 1973, the IDF had to develop a doctrine for treating battle stress victims *after* the war. This involved, for example, the assignment of professional psychiatric teams to medical battalions at division level.[135]

The 1973 conflict was not a short war by Israeli standards, especially in light of the time necessary before Israeli reservists could return to civilian life. Many reservists served much longer than three weeks. In 1967, the IDF began demobilizing major units two days after the cessation of hostilities; but in 1973, Israel faced a very different war termination. Israel signed its disengagement of forces agreement with Egypt on 18 January and with Syria on 31 May 1974. But during the period before each agreement, numerous incidents on both fronts increased Israeli casualty figures. The Egyptians claimed that they killed 187 Israeli soldiers, destroyed forty-one tanks, and downed eleven planes over a period of nearly three months.[136] On the northern front, Israel suffered thirty-seven soldiers killed and 158 wounded between March and May 1974 alone. Owing to the indecisive end of the 1973 war, coupled with the existence of vulnerable salients on both fronts, Israel had to maintain many reservists on active duty, with some reserve units remaining mobilized until as late as April 1974. A number of the reservists who remained on active duty for so long suffered economic hardships.

Rather quickly, the Israelis became obsessed with the question of what went wrong. Many Israelis called for accountability and demanded an impartial inquiry be convened to investigate what became known as *machdal*, or the blunder—that is, the failure of the government and the army to avoid the initial surprise attack and its consequences. A growing avalanche of protests finally compelled Golda Meir to agree to the formation of such a body. On 18 November 1973, the Israeli cabinet set the commission's mandate: first, to investigate the intelligence, assessments, and decisions made prior to the outbreak of the war; and, second, to examine the IDF's deployment, preparedness, and actions up to the point where it contained the Arab forces. On 21 November, the board met under the chairmanship of the Dr. Shimon Agranat, the American-born president of Israel's supreme court. The other esteemed members of what became known as the Agranat Commission were well-respected figures: two former chiefs of the General Staff, a supreme court justice, and the state comptroller. Proceedings began on 25 November.

While the Agranat Commission conducted its secret probe, a number of Israeli generals joined the public debate by criticizing each other's performances, spawning what became known as "the war of the generals." Part of the controversy revolved around the countercrossing to the west bank. During the first critical days of the operation, Sharon had pushed for the transfer of more troops to the west bank and would later recommend a push north to Ismailia to cut off Second Army. Elazar, Bar-Lev, and Gonen had instead opted for assigning priority to widening the corridor on the east bank to Deversoir, fearing that the Egyptians might cut the logistic line to Sharon. This controversy in the midst of war replayed itself in peacetime. While a number of generals publicly fired salvos at each other, soldiers wrote letters to newspapers offering their own complaints and criticisms, and many veterans from the war joined protest demonstrations against the government, in particular singling out Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan for special attacks.[137] Never before had the IDF experienced such heavy criticism and soul-searching.

Israeli Tank Battles

IDF forces pulling back from the canal following disengagement talks. The banner reads: "From the war of the Egyptians to the war of the Jews"—an allusion to the heated political environment in Israel after the end of the war fighting

The national turmoil also affected politics. In late December, Israel held national elections, originally scheduled for 30 October but postponed owing to the outbreak of war. Golda Meir and the Labor Party returned to power, but at a loss of six seats. The new Labor coalition government held only 51 seats out of a total of 120 in the Knesset, and Meir took until 10 March 1974 to form her coalition cabinet. But this achievement proved short-lived, for on 2 April 1974, after holding 140 meetings and hearing fifty-eight witnesses, the Agranat Commission presented an interim report, in large measure to provide a demanding public with some concrete answers. The initial revelations proved damaging enough to cause a major tumult throughout Israeli society and its armed forces.

Commission members castigated Israeli Military Intelligence for failing to assess accurately the available information that clearly pointed to a high probability for war.[138] Senior intelligence officers discovered their error too late and therefore failed to deliver on their contract of a forty-eight-hour advance warning. In light of this serious failure, the report recommended the termination of the careers of the director of Military Intelligence, his assistant in charge of research, the head of the Egyptian research section, and the chief intelligence officer for Southern Command. All these senior officers—one major general, one brigadier general, and two lieutenant colonels—quickly left military service.

Commission members also found David Elazar seriously negligent in several areas. The chief of the General Staff had suffered from "an overconfidence in the I.D.F.'s ability to repulse under any circumstances an all-out attack by the enemy on two fronts."[139] Consequently, the

Israeli Army lacked a "detailed" plan based on realistic assessments of their adversaries' capabilities in the event of a surprise Arab attack. Moreover, the commission concluded that Elazar should have ordered a partial mobilization by the morning of 5 October as a precautionary measure, given the unusually large number of Arab troops massing on both the northern and southern fronts. Finally, the High Command erred in failing to provide clear instructions for deployment, according to war plans, once it became certain the Arabs would attack that same day. While recognizing the chief of the General Staff for his invaluable leadership during the war, the commission still recommended that Elazar resign in light of his grievous mistakes. Elazar, surprised and shocked by this part of the report, left the military with bitter feelings. Many say he died of a broken heart in 1976 while writing his memoirs to vindicate himself.

The Agranat Commission's other major casualty was the front commander. Shmuel Gonen had emerged a hero from the Six Day War as commander of the elite 7th Armored Brigade that had led ground forces in their lightning advance across the Sinai. In only four days, his brigade had captured Rafah and al-Arish on the northern route, then pushed through Egyptian defenses in the Bir Gifgafa area, before reaching the Suez Canal. In the 1973 War, however, fortune failed to shine on Gonen, now a major general. During the first few days of the war, he proved ineffective in command and suddenly found himself relieved on 10 October, remaining as a deputy to the new front commander. After the Agranat's negative evaluation of his performance, Gonen left the army in disgrace and went into an eventual self-imposed exile abroad.

While recommending the dismissal of key senior officers, the Agranat Commission failed to indict the country's political leadership. This part of the report sparked outrage and protests throughout the country. The public, already reeling from the impact of high war casualties and shocked by the revelations of the army's serious failings, felt that the commission had turned the senior military leadership into scapegoats for the failures of the politicians. Many Israelis felt that Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan should have borne some responsibility for the state of the military's unpreparedness before the war. News leaks describing Dayan's erratic behavior during the war ignited a powerful wave of criticism fueled by intellectuals, the press, and opposition parties. Dayan's refusal to step down when confronted with calls for his resignation ignited a further crisis for Meir's fragile coalition government.

Rather than adopt a siege mentality, Meir bowed to the growing public furor and resigned on 11 April 1974. On 3 June, Yitzak Rabin, the chief of the General Staff in the Six Day War, became Israel's fifth prime minister and the first native-born Israeli to hold the position. The Labor party thus managed to retain the reigns of government, but the ruling elite suffered a serious blow. Eventually, the 1977 elections ushered in a new era in Israeli politics when Menachem Begin and the Likud party came to power, ending the Labor party's continuous reign since the establishment of Israel in 1948.

The Agranat Report shattered two popular notions in Israeli society: the infallibility of the intelligence community and the invincibility of the armed forces. Both beliefs drew sustenance in large measure from the blitzkrieg-type victory of the Six Day War. In 1973, that triumph came to haunt the IDF as an albatross: a less than stellar performance would fail to meet Israeli society's high expectations. The periods of shock, uncertainty, and peril that had ripped through the armed forces and society during the first days of the war became indelibly ingrained on the national psyche. The overall experience of the 1973 war humbled the Israelis and altered the Israeli

political landscape. It spawned, moreover, a willingness in the Israelis to negotiate with the Arabs. The Israelis now needed an Arab statesman courageous enough to shatter the iron curtain that hindered serious diplomatic dialogue between Israel and the Arab world.

Sadat boldly stepped into that role, offering Israel an olive branch of peace. At first, a great deal of skepticism emanated from the Israeli leadership toward this Arab leader who had recently started a war with Israel. Cracking the barrier of suspicion and mistrust between the two worlds required the involvement of the United States, an intercession that began in earnest on 6 November 1973 with Kissinger's first visit to Egypt. Subsequent discussions between Egypt and Israel dragged along through several phases until American diplomatic pressures and monetary incentives finally resulted in the Camp David Accords of September 1978, followed by a peace treaty signed by Sadat and Begin on 26 March 1979. Through diplomacy, Sadat thus managed to gain the return of the entire Sinai to Egypt without another major conflict. Furthermore, by the 1980s, Egypt had become America's main recipient of foreign aid after Israel. Before his assassination on 6 October 1981, Sadat could claim that he had reestablished Egyptian national pride, regained the Sinai, and attracted Western capital. For this, however, he paid an unexpectedly high price—Egypt's temporary isolation in the Arab world and his own life.

While the political landscape changed dramatically in the Middle East, the IDF also underwent significant changes as a direct result of the 1973 war. Instead of cutting down the requirement for national service, as planned before the war, the government doubled the size of its standing army by 1982, as the Israelis learned the importance of quantity, not just quality, in conventional warfare. Additionally, Arab tactical successes with antitank and surface-to-air missiles exposed doctrinal flaws in the IDF. Israeli doctrine consequently lessened its preponderant emphasis on armor and addressed combined arms more attentively—although tanks still remained central to the Israeli way of war. This doctrinal shift caused a significant increase in the number of self-propelled artillery pieces, which would strengthen maneuver through more firepower on the ground, thereby diminishing the army's previous reliance on the air force in the role of flying artillery. In addition, new military budgets included funds for the purchase of modern armored personnel carriers. These would provide greater protection to infantry and engineers on the new, lethal battlefield. The Israeli Air Force, for its part, devoted more attention to the air defense threat, including the purchase of airborne warning and air control system (AWACS) equipment and the manufacture of drone planes.[140] By 1982, the IDF had undergone significant changes in doctrine, force structure, and mindset. The Israelis realized that future wars could turn into long and bloody affairs requiring both large numbers in men and materiel and quality; the Egyptians had taught the world an important lesson in this regard.

Anwar Sadat clearly offers an excellent example of Carl von Clausewitz' dictum that war is an extension of policy by another means. By employing the Egyptian Armed Forces within their capabilities to achieve a limited military success, the Egyptian leader established the conditions for postwar negotiations. Admittedly, the Egyptians had some luck on their side. They had lost the initiative on 14 October, allowing the IDF to exploit Egyptian weaknesses and mistakes to surround Third Army. Fortunately for Sadat, superpower intervention averted a major defeat of the Third Army. No one in Egypt could have predicted the American response and the cease-fire's timing. Luck thus proved an important ingredient aiding Sadat in his statesmanship during the war. After the war and until 1979, Sadat employed various diplomatic tactics before gaining an Israeli commitment to return the Sinai.

President Anwar Sadat and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger during postwar negotiations

A weaker adversary thus proved capable of forcing a more powerful opponent and two superpowers to change their attitude toward the Middle East—this was no mean accomplishment. The Egyptians made this political victory possible in large measure because of the much-improved performance of their military in the 1973 war. The Israelis, for their part, realized painfully that any future conflict with the Arabs carried the unwelcome prospect of a heavy toll in Israeli lives. Military power thus had its limits in forcing a stable peace. Without the Egyptians' successful crossing operation, their establishment of secure bridgeheads, and the high casualties inflicted by the Arabs on the Israeli armies on both fronts, Israel would have had little incentive to sign a peace treaty with Egypt. The Egyptians achieved their success by beginning the war with a surprise offensive; by challenging the Israeli Air Force for control of the air with an

integrated air defense system; and by enticing the Israelis into launching premature attacks against prepared defensive positions. The limited nature of the conflict, as defined by Sadat's war strategy, favored the defense and attrition warfare. The IDF eventually gained the initiative and turned the tide of the war—but at a great cost in men and materiel and without achieving a decisive victory. The Israeli military success at the end proved hollow, indeed, given all the loss in lives, and it could not hide the fact that the IDF had fallen far short of its self-proclaimed military of excellence.

RELEVANCE FOR TODAY. The 1973 war had an immediate and profound impact on the U. S. Army after Vietnam. Drawing upon several studies of that conflict, General William E. DePuy, the first commander of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, published a new military doctrine in 1976 called "Active Defense." This field manual drew upon the example of the 1973 War to emphasize the new lethality of the battlefield, the importance of combined arms, and the mutual interdependence of air and ground forces.[141] These tactical "lessons" provided clear direction for modernizing and professionalizing the U.S. armed forces that fought Desert Storm. Today, the strategic message of the 1973 war carries perhaps even greater relevance for the armed forces of the United States.

The demise of the Cold War has catapulted the United States into sole possession of superpower status, making this country's armed forces seemingly invincible before any conventional military threat. The success of U.S. forces in Desert Storm remains among the American people a vivid memory of a quick and overwhelming military victory achieved with remarkably few American casualties. The end of the Cold War and Desert Storm thus contain within them the seeds for a potentially dangerous situation, analogous to the experience of Israel after its dramatic triumph over the Arabs in 1967, when no Arab army or combination of Arab armies appeared capable of challenging the IDF in open battle. The Israelis could confidently claim a distinct edge in intelligence, air force, and maneuver (armored) warfare. Today, the United States armed forces can make a similar claim and for similar reasons.

The United States rightly deserves to take pride in its armed forces and their coalition partners for virtually destroying the fighting power of the Iraqi military in a mere 100 hours. A repeat of this exemplary performance now has turned into an imperative, as proclaimed in 1992 by General Gordon Sullivan, the Army Chief of Staff: "The standard for America's Army must be 'decisive victory.'"[142] The current FM 100-5, *Operations*, the capstone manual of the U. S. Army published in June 1993, reiterates Sullivan's litmus test for military excellence, defining decisive victory as "to win quickly with minimum casualties."[143] Nothing less is acceptable.

To achieve such a victory in the next war, the U.S. military is relying on technological superiority—America's strong suit in the twentieth century. Desert Storm validated this article of faith. Television footage captured the image of a missile descending the shaft of the headquarters of the Iraqi Air Force and underscored the dawn of a new era in warfare—what many contemporary military writers refer to variously as a revolution in military affairs, information war, or space war in the twenty-first century.

Technological advances now allow an armed force to make exact strikes of military targets with minimal collateral damage. In the future, armed forces will conduct war using highly sophisticated sensory equipment, precision guided weapons, and stealth delivery systems. Today, the United States armed forces maintain a clear advantage in the three critical areas of

intelligence, air power, and maneuver warfare—the latter centered on sophisticated tanks and attack helicopters employing night-vision technology. All this technological wizardry appears highly impressive, and there is a pervasive belief that sophisticated simulation will prepare American soldiers and commanders for war by replicating "virtual combat" in training exercises. Yet the 1973 war precisely demonstrates the limits of superior military power in the face of a skillful and lucky adversary who can find effective countermeasures to transform war into a bloody affair filled with uncertainty, confusion, and human frailty.

In the final analysis, the October War holds a critical lesson for the United States. The dramatic Israeli victory in the Six Day War created an albatross in Israel. The Israelis expected that their superior armed forces would win the next war quickly, decisively, and with relatively few casualties, and the Israeli military felt compelled (perhaps unconsciously) to plan for a repeat performance. When the next war proved exceedingly difficult and costly, Israeli passions became inflamed after the conflict, and the public forced the prime minister to form an impartial commission of inquiry whose findings tarnished the image of the IDF and ended the successful careers of a number of senior officers. Eventually, the ruling party itself fell from power, initiating a new era in Israeli politics followed by a peace treaty with Egypt that included the return of the Sinai. Ironically, Sadat had achieved a political victory even though the IDF had operationally and tactically defeated his armed forces.

With this example in mind, political and military leaders in the United States should take heed of the fourth Arab-Israeli war lest the legacy of Desert Storm should also become an albatross in the form of a tacit promise to the American people to deliver another quick, decisive, and relatively bloodless victory through superior intelligence, air power, and maneuver forces on the ground. A clever adversary, perhaps blessed with luck, can turn this pledge into a rude awakening as happened to Israel in October 1973.